

PRESS & TELEVISION

As feminists see it, television producers persist in presenting outdated images of women in American society.



But some statistics seem to support the feminist position, she writes. A 1977 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights study found that, since 1954, women have accounted for only 45 percent of the people “presented on television” and 20 percent of those with TV jobs. (In fact, women now make up 52.4 percent of the U.S. population and 50.7 percent of the labor force.) Less than 10 percent of station-break announcements are made by women. Even in the “pseudo-egalitarian world” of soap operas, male characters dominate the drama; they, more than women, provide advice on “personal entanglements.”

Women are not yet on an equal footing with men in television’s corporate offices. “Evidence of discrimination in hiring and promotion,” Tuchman notes, “was strong enough for women employees to have won lawsuits or achieved substantial out-of-court settlements from each of the three television networks” during the early 1970s.

But, once in a position of responsibility, will television’s corporate women be quick to make changes? Women who wish to get ahead in the business, Tuchman says, are expected to support the company line, whether it is sexist or otherwise. Most important, future women professionals seem to have the same image of the female population that men do. In a 1977 survey of female journalism students, for example, the typical young interviewee described her own interest in politics as “unusual” for her sex. Most women, the students averred, prefer the traditional fare found on the “women’s pages” of newspapers.

*Electronic
Thievery*

“Your Money and Your Life” by David A. Cook, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (July/Aug. 1979), Subscription Service Dept., 200 Alton Pl., Marion, Ohio 43302.

Americans pay a high price for commercial television, argues Cook, an English professor at Emory University.

The business of television, he contends, is not, as popularly assumed, selling products to the viewer. Rather, it is selling potential consumers

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to advertisers. The stakes are formidable. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. homes have a television set, and the average American spends more than four hours a day watching TV.

For the privilege of addressing their large audiences, the networks charge advertisers hefty fees. In 1979, 60 seconds of prime time (8 to 11 P.M., EST) sells for an average of \$100,000. Most commercials are costly—production charges can run up to \$50,000. The consumer ends up bearing the brunt of the advertisers' expenses in increased prices for goods, Cook writes. And, in effect, he also willingly gives away his time to the networks, which then sell it to the advertisers "at a huge net profit annually." (The television industry's revenues reached \$5.9 billion in 1977.) Drawn by the promise of free entertainment, he concludes, "we are selling off our most precious and nonrenewable resource—the time of our lives—for a handful of electronic gimcracks."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Why Jonestown?

"Jonestown: The Enduring Questions" by Henry Warner Bowden, in *Theology Today* (Apr. 1979), P.O. Box 29, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

More than 600 religious sects have been established in the United States since 1650. All have suffered from the jibes and hostility of the American public, observes Bowden, a religion professor at Douglass College, Rutgers University.

U.S. religious sects "have exhibited the widest possible range of attitudes regarding private property, sexual relations, [and] governmental theories," Bowden writes. Most have been short-lived; the exceptions—Quakers, Mormons, Black Muslims—have acquired a respectability that their early critics could not have foreseen. Contemporary sects are no easier to fathom. Who could have predicted the grisly evolution of the Reverend Jim Jones' People's Temple?

Individuals who are drawn to religious sects tend to feel isolated from established churches. As members of a sect, their alienation is heightened by the pressure within a small group to conform. Later, public disapproval reinforces their isolation.

Excessive conformity deadens the members' critical sense, Bowden says. Members may "compensate for their inadequacies by projecting religious ideals" onto the group leader. Mass deaths, such as occurred at Jonestown, Guyana, in November 1978, are, Bowden says, "simply the most graphic of the types of suicide possible within isolated, high-pressure sectarian communities."

Yet God "speaks to mankind" in "many different ways." To con-